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ABSTRACT

The philosophy behind adult literacy in Zanzibar is that adult literacy is a process whereby the illiterate is empowered to become aware of his or her potential. Literacy activities emphasize a relation to work, sometimes known as functional literacy. Specific objectives of literacy programs are to improve living conditions, impart self-reliant knowledge and skills, eradicate illiteracy, make people conscious of government policies, and advance people to the best of their ability. Classes are conducted wherever premises are available. Literacy programs have included wiping out illiteracy in female co-operative groups; eradicating illiteracy among fishermen; establishing literacy classes in agricultural zones; and launching literacy classes in residential areas. Literacy programs use different methods and techniques, but are frequently guided by the principle of active education. Global and semi-global methods relating the learning of reading and writing with understanding of a message are increasingly widespread. Major problems in achievement of the government's goal of eradicating illiteracy are teacher shortage, curricula, lack of research, traditional assessment, materials shortage, program relevancy, and permanent buildings. Future plans include classes for the disabled, linking literacy programs and primary education, inservice teacher training through distance education, and alternative programs for dropouts. (YLB)

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Adult Literacy in Zanzibar

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Ahmed H. Saadat

Paper Presented at the Africa Regional Literacy Forum

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Ahmed H. Saadat

1. INTRODUCTION

The philosophy behind adult literacy in Zanzibar is that adult literacy is a process whereby the illiterate is empowered to become aware of his own potential. With increasing literacy comes a positive change in the learner's self image and his role within society.

Literacy activities in Zanzibar put more emphasis relating to work sometimes known as functional literacy. The thrust of functional literacy is to improve the entire context of family life of the targeted people, in areas such as family planning, health, budgeting, civic responsibilities, etc. This thrust is based on the irrefutable fact that a modest advance in the educational standard of the parents usually results in advances in life standards of their children with associated benefits such as less school truance.

2. ORGANIZATION OF LITERACY PROGRAMMES IN ZANZIBAR

Literacy programmes in Zanzibar have a very long history going back to early 1600's. Early literacy classes were concerned with the knowledge of how people can prevent themselves from dangerous diseases like cholera and malaria which affected many people who were needed to work in the cloves and coconut plantation. In 1978, a major compaign was launched intended to mobilise people to attend literacy classes. According to the 1978 population census, Zanzibar had 243,579 adults, out of these 95043 or 39% were illiterate.

Literacy programmes in Zanzibar are the responsibility of the Department of Adult Education which was established in 1978 under the Ministry of Education. The Government therefore is in charge of adult education programmes. This responsibility, however, is occasionally entrusted to other departments and ministries, especially those concerned with social affairs and development.

Specific objectives of literacy programmes in Zanzibar are:

(i) to improve the living conditions of the people

(ii) to impart self-reliant knowledge and skills

(iii) to eradicate illiteracy

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(iv) to make people conscious of government polices, and

(v) to advance the people to the best of their ability.

The realization of these objectives has been outlined in the ten year Educational Master Plan (1996 - 2006). In the plan, functional literacy is given a top priority in the hope that it will result in empowerment of the people.

Literacy classes are conducted wherever premises are available (schools, buildings, privates home party branches, etc.) and even in the open air. The Department of Adult Education is planning to encourage villagers to build literacy centers which will have the advantage of being useful as multi-service community centres.

Literacy Classes are mainly organised in four stages. Stages 1-3 mainly focus on reading, writing, and numerals, stage 4 focuses on functional literacy skills, particularly in-home craft, agriculture, fishing, pottery, typewriting, and soap making. These programmes are supported by radio education programmes, a rural newspaper, and rural libraries.

3. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

Since its establishment in 1978 the Department of Adult Education in Zanzibar has put much of its efforts in fighting illiteracy. The main objectives of the Department of Adult Education are:

(i) to increase basic literacy rate from 21% to 85% by the year 2,000

(ii) to initiate functional literacy programme for fishing, trade, and farming committees

(iii) to reduce gender disparities in literacy, and

(iv) to reduce regional disparities by giving priority attention to areas where literacy is a problem.

In March 1986 the first literacy census in Zanzibar conducted by the Ministry of Education identified 126,002 illiterates out of the total population of 600,000. Thus about 39% of the population were illiterate. The 1991 statistics show that there were 115,129 illiterate adults in Zanzibar.

But Kweka in his 1994 report estimates that the total number of illiterate adults in Zanzibar to be around 184,706. This suggests a lapse in literacy activities between 1991 and 1994. Different literacy programmes were conducted in Zanzibar to fight against illiteracy. These include the following:

(i) *Wiping out illiteracy in female co-operative groups*

In Zanzibar, illiteracy among women groups has been identified as a major handicap in the execution of their activities. The Department of Adult Education, in

collaboration with the UNICEF sub-office Zanzibar, has launched a project to solve the problem by supporting activities in women groups. Seventeen women co-operative groups in Unguja and nine women co-operative groups in Pemba were involved in the project. This gave a total number of 26 women groups in Zanzibar which constitute 527 adult learners.

During the first evaluation, the result showed that 309 learners qualified for further stages. Those who qualified were trained to become the group literacy teachers. The problems encountered during the implementation of this project include drop-outs among the learners and incompetence among literacy teachers.

(ii) *Eradicating illiteracy among the fishermen*

The need to establish literacy classes in the fishing areas was initiated by UNESCO in collaboration with the Department with the aim of wiping out illiteracy by the year 2,000, focusing on the less privileged groups. The mini project was supposed to operate in various fishing areas in both Unguja and Pemba. But due to financial constraints the exercise was first conducted in only two fishing areas one from Unguja and one from Pemba.

The aim was to have five classes in each fishing area. But due to shortage of teachers, only 3 classes were opened in Unguja. A total of 8 classes were opened in these two fishing areas. The classes brought together 148 learners - in both Unguja and Pemba. The training included the following: adult methods, adult psychology, book keeping, health education, evaluation, and the role of the literacy teachers. The results of the training encourage both the literacy teachers and the facilitators, who at the beginning found the exercise to be tough.

The programme was briefly interrupted by the government when it launched a programme to develop the fishing villages by building modern houses with all necessary facilities. The project has just completed and has given the department an opportunity to continue with the programme.

(iii) *Establishment of literacy classes in Agricultural zones*

The programme covers the areas with fertile land. It is common thing in Zanzibar for peasants to farm for a long time (3-6 months), then come home for a short period, and back to their working places. These people have no time to attend literacy classes at their homes. It was therefore thought appropriate to start literacy classes in the farming areas. Two agricultural areas, Pangani and Cheju were chosen as the areas. These have more than 200 adults. Four classes were opened. For a period of 3 months, 150 adults were liberated and continued to another stage. The conduction of classes was not continuous as much as depended on the cultivating seasons. The adults of the areas were much concerned with the production of rice, which is seasonally cultivated.

(iv) *Literacy classes in the residential areas*

In the living areas on both islands, adult literacy classes were regularly launched. In a period of five years between 1990 and 1995 more than 2,000 in agreement with

Jomtien declaration adult learners in these classes have been liberated. This is below the department goals of liberating 40,000 learners in this period. The programme had encountered various problems including low participation of learners, drop-out, scarcity of teaching and learning materials, and lack of public support. However, the present number of adults who participated in this programme (5433) gives hope to the future of literacy programmes in Zanzibar.

4. TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS

Training for adult education teachers is done regularly each year. A total number of 259 adult teachers are trained yearly. The training covers various areas, including adult psychology, adult methodologies, evaluation record keeping, mass media, and philosophies of adult education. As in other areas of adult literacy programmes, training for adult teachers brings about financial problems, but the department has always used its scarce resources to make sure that training is offered yearly.

5. METHODS

Literacy programmes in Zanzibar make use of different methods and techniques but are frequently guided by the principle of active education. Traditional teaching methods relying on the mechanical learning of the alphabet and on learning by rote are becoming increasingly less used in Zanzibar. Global and semi-global methods relating the learning of reading and writing with the understanding of a message (conveyed by an image or practical demonstrations and talks followed by discussion) are increasingly becoming widespread. In this way, littered work in Zanzibar has to some extent helped to disseminate the use of new methods and techniques (eg. environmental studies, practical activities, group discussions and work) which formal education has normally been slow to adopt.

In many cases, the methods used are revised and adapted to local situations, in direct relationship with the specific objectives of the goot. The circumstances in which the methods are applied, i.e. motivation and interest of learners, (and hence their regular attendance) and the quality of instruction given as regard to both the level of the instructors and the availability of educational material, are to a large extent determining factors in literacy programmes in Zanzibar. In this connection, one may note that the use of usual elements (photos and drawings related to the lessons and discussions subjects) is widespread in literacy programmes. Primary school teachers in both urban and rural areas are specially seconded for literacy classes. Some heads of school who directly supervise the literacy programmes are not paid a regular salary but are paid a honorarium. Department of Adult Education is the responsible authority for paying the teachers monthly.

In Zanzibar the duties and status of literacy personnel are divided into the following categories:

(i) intermediate staff (middle-level administrator and operational personnel)

(ii) supervisors of local activities

(iii) local leaders and animators (primarily responsible for the organisation and running of literacy classes)

6. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The fact that all these literacy activities are being carried out resolutely despite a number of problems, including the serious shortage of human, material, and financial resources, bears witness to the desire of the Ministry of Education through the department of Adult Education, to wipe out illiteracy among the Zanzibar citizens as soon as possible. The following are the major problems in the achievement of the Government's goal:

(i) *Shortage of teachers*

The general inadequacy of staff training at all levels has considerably hampered the department's efforts to reduce illiteracy in Zanzibar.

(ii) *Curricula*

Curricula are not always consistent with the stated objectives. One example is the introduction of productive work, which sometimes takes the form of work in a school garden or field with the curricula remaining unchanged.

(iii) *Lack of research*

Field research, which is necessary for strengthening appropriate teaching and learning activities, is not done.

(iv) *Examination*

Another obstacle facing literacy programmes in Zanzibar is the traditional examination system, which is typically a school examination system. There is no change in the various forms of assessment of knowledge and skills.

(v) *Shortage of materials*

Lack or shortage of suitable textbooks and teaching material detracts from the quality of literacy education.

(vi) *Relevancy of Programmes*

Another problem which is shared by all literacy programmes is the failure to train personal at different level on-the-job (after an initial training period of some duration) due to the scarcity of funds. One example is the fact that nothing more has been arranged to continue the education of some members in the womens' cooperative groups who have already completed the third stage of their development. This situation may discourage most of the women especially those in the rural areas to join the centres.

(vii) *Permanent building*

Lack of enough permanent buildings for literacy activities is another obstacle towards the achievements of the objectives. At present, most of the activities are done in the political party's building, and especially in the Rulin Party building. But with the adoption of multi-party system in 1992 the idea is not conducive enough. It is not possible for the illiterate adults who are not ruling party supporters to be grouped in those building.

7. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES

Literacy programmes in Zanzibar are expected to make changes by mainly focusing on margnalized groups including the disabled. For long time, the disabled have not benefited much from the existing programmes. Special efforts will be done in cooperation with the Zanzibar Disabled Association to establish these classes.

To a large extent there is a possibility of linking literacy programmes and primary education. At the present there is a type of cooperation which is frequent and involves the use of teachers in literacy classes. But the participation of teachers would be greatly facilitated if some literacy or post-literacy programmes corresponded to school curricula. This would make those who have completed their stage to continue with the primary education through literacy programmes. Another possible type of linkage which Zanzibar literacy programmes would insist on is the complementary training of teachers in literacy work and adult education in general. This will include the introduction of adult education (optional) in the training course offered in the teacher's training college. An establishment of an in-service teacher training course through distance education. Literacy programmes in Zanzibar would also put much effort into established special alternative programmes for school drop-outs who are illiterate. This programme would employ simple methods, which are initially designed to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, at a later stage to transmit locus and practical skills. In other circumstances, pre-vocational training for the youth will be linked with literacy work so that the strategy selected will also allow for practical activities.

Finally some literacy programmes will give priority to the shaping of political awareness through appropriate lectures and discussions.

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